Minutes

ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS

PARMA, ITALY

24 OCTOBER 2007

MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS:

Chair: GASSIN Anne-Laure, Communications Director

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Czech Republic	**BALGA Josef**
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Observers and Invitees of the Communications Director:

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Apologies:

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France	**LEYDET Valérie**
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Luxembourg	**HAU Patrick**
Portugal	**LAGE Manuel**
Romania	**MONEA Alina - Ioana**
Spain	**ALONSO MARTIN Hector**
Hungary	**CSEH Júlia**

1. Adoption of the agenda by Anne-Laure Gassin

(Doc **AF Comm WG 24.10.07 – 1**)

1.1 Anne-Laure Gassin, Director of Communications at EFSA, opened the meeting thanking the participants for their attendance. She also introduced the new members and the new EFSA staff joining for the meeting. After mentioning the names of the colleagues who sent their apologies, she also invited the participants to watch the videos produced by the Austrian food safety agency and by EFSA on the occasion of its 5th Anniversary, to be made available during a coffee break.

1.2 As no additional items were indicated by the group members, the agenda was adopted as proposed.

2. Minutes of the meeting 05 07 07 and matters arising

(Doc **AF Comm WG 24.10.07– 2)**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 5th July in Helsinki were approved without changes and will be published on the EFSA website.

2.2 Anne-Laure Gassin added that in future the Working Group will approve the minutes by written procedure, thus following the same procedure as the Advisory Forum. The AF secretariat is currently finalising the procedure which will be approved at the December meeting in Den Haag. It was decided that the minutes will be circulated to the group members for approval as quickly as possible after the meeting.

2.3 Among the matters arising from the previous meeting, Anne-Laure Gassin mentioned cloning, for which a section has been created on the Extranet; the document of the Task Force on key learnings to be kept in mind when reacting to unsound information in the media, also posted on the extranet; the press offices' mailing list shared with the members and available on the extranet; and finally progress on co-operation in communication, which will be handled later under item 5.

3. Update on progress at EFSA by Anne-Laure Gassin

3.1 In order to update the group on EFSA's scientific activities, Anne-Laure Gassin mentioned the work done by the scientific panels; in particular, she referred to the recent discussions on the evaluation of a study on food colours. Concerning EFSA's capacity and capability she stressed how priority setting is critical in dealing with increasing workload and urgencies. She informed the group that a new panel will be created which will allow to split the increasing workload currently managed by the AFC Panel (Panel on additives, flavourings, processing aids and materials in contact with food): one will assess the safety of food additives and nutrient sources, and the other food contact materials, enzymes and flavourings. A call is expected to be launched in December for the recruitment of new experts.

3.2 EFSA is reinforcing its organisational structure in order to facilitate implementation of the Strategy for Cooperation and Networking with Member States. To this end, Hubert Deluyker was recently appointed as Head of the new department in charge of Scientific Cooperation and Assistance, which includes Scientific Cooperation, Data Collection Exposure, Emerging Risks, Assessment Methodology, Pesticides and Zoonoses. Anne-Laure Gassin also said that cooperation is now entering into the implementation phase through progress on various scientific projects conducted jointly with Member Sates (the so called ESCO projects). These projects include: establishment European networks of food consumption and database managers as well as managers of chemical occurrence data; risks and benefits of fortification of food with folic acid; harmonisation of risk assessment methodologies; setting up a database of scientific experts; and emerging risks. A working group on nanotechnology will be also set up.

3.3 Anne-Laure Gassin briefly updated the group on cooperation with EU Agencies such as the ECDC and international partners such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. A meeting will be soon organised to discuss further cooperation areas with the US FDA.

3.4 As independence is key to ensuring confidence in the Authority and its scientific outputs, Anne-Laure Gassin mentioned the new policy on Declarations of Interests and informed the group that a presentation on the subject is foreseen in the agenda.

3.5 As far as the communications activities are concerned, Anne-Laure Gassin informed that a new, more user-friendly version of the EFSA website was launched on 4th September. She thanked members who had participated in user workshops to help guide these new developments. She also mentioned the joint events with the Romanian food safety authorities on 10th September, with the Spanish food safety agency on 13th September, as well as the event jointly organised with the Portuguese authority. She passed then to media activities, illustrating increase in coverage on specific issues such as colours.

3.6 Anne-Laure concluded mentioning the new challenges for EFSA, such as the work on innovative technologies, new emerging risks and the importance of developing more and more simple, timely and accurate information. As no questions were raised, she gave the floor to Torben Nilsson, Team Leader of the Advisory Forum Unit.

4. Key points arising from the Advisory Forum meeting Lisbon 20 September by Torben Nilsson / Update on cooperation projects by Daniela Maurici (SCAF) and Sergio Potier Rodeia (SC)

4.1 Torben Nilsson summarised the outcome of the Advisory Forum (AF) meeting in Lisbon on 20th September. He mentioned the comments made by the AF members on the Management Plan 2008; further agreements on the creation of focal points will be signed in future (Italy was the first country to sign such an agreement in October in the context of EFSA's 5 Year Anniversary activities in Parma), some have already nominated the responsible person and some are still in the nomination process. The implementation will certainly contribute to increased co-operation and build awareness of EFSA's work in the Member States.

4.2 Torben Nilsson reminded the group of the importance of the collaboration among Member States, recalled the chronology of the Strategy for Cooperation and Networking and gave details on the Steering Group on Cooperation established to prioritise and coordinate activities related to the ESCO projects, formerly named front-runner projects. The key role of the Group was to consider possible participants to the working groups, to provide feedback to the Advisory Forum and the Scientific Committee, and monitor the implementation strategy.
Working groups and networks are being created, while two networks, one on food consumption data and one related to chemical occurrence databases, have already started their activities. Working groups have already been established, too: these dealing with emerging risks, experts' database, and fortification of food with folic acid and harmonisation of risk assessment approaches.

4.3 Daniela Maurici, Scientific Officer in the SC & AF Unit, presented the working group on emerging risks, established last July. She gave the definition of an emerging risk and outlined the tasks of the working group which include: to list priority indicators to identify emerging risks, to identify key sources, to propose methodologies, to develop data collection and analysis procedures, to review research projects and recommend research activities. In future the working group will also provide support to Member States to assist in the assessment of indicators and signals detected and a network will be developed to gather, filter and circulate information to other EU bodies.

4.4 Sergio Potier Rodeia from the Scientific Cooperation Unit at EFSA updated the group on the expert database project which has the goal of establishing a searchable database of scientific experts that may provide support to the Scientific Committee, EFSA Panels, the Advisory Forum, the Scientific Cooperation and Assistance Department at EFSA and other

EFSA expert working groups. The setting up of such a database will enhance the transparency of scientific competence brought into support and contribute to EFSA's scientific work; enhance EFSA's capacity in conducting risk assessments and allow EFSA to respond more effectively in cases of emerging risks and crisis situations.

4.5 Following a question posed by Gaby-Fleur Böl on selection criteria for the experts' database, it was stressed that the definition of the structure of the database, eligibility criteria for inclusion of experts and strategy for populating the database is still open for discussion and to be agreed by the expert working group.

4.6 The Advisory Forum and its working groups will be kept informed by EFSA of the progress and timelines of the ESCO working groups and networks.

5. Co-operation in communications

5.1 Anne-Laure Gassin introduced the topic reminding that three cooperation projects had been identified by the group and gave the floor to three colleagues at EFSA, who gave an update respectively on the A-4 supplement to the EFSAnews, on the cooperation web text and on joint events with Member States.

5.2 Claire Gaudout, Publications Officer at EFSA, reminded the group of the decision to produce a newsletter focused on cooperation and networking with Member States and dedicated to common scientific issues and the ESCO projects. The Newsletter, a draft of which was circulated, will be published twice a year in the four EFSA working languages. It will target risk assessors and managers, industry, media, consumers and other stakeholders. The first issue in English language is scheduled to be made available on the occasion of the 5th Anniversary events in Brussels (19-22 November). The group will be able to contribute to the draft. Some graphical mock-ups were shown and two title proposals were indicated by Claire Gaudout. Members agreed that the newsletter should carry the EFSA logo and if possible the logos of the 27 Member States. Members expressed their preference for the title "Moving together" and it was agreed that this proposal would be taken to the Editorial Board.

5.3 Daniel Glanville, Web Manager *ad interim* at EFSA, referred to the cooperation web text that was circulated at the July meeting and asked members if they were interested in publishing it on their websites. Whilst some members confirmed they had already uploaded the text on their website, others said their websites were still being developed and it was not yet suitable to integrate such a text. Oskar Wawschinek informed that the text had not been uploaded on the Austrian agency's website as it had not been made available on the extranet and the German version is not available. Members were reminded that the text provided by EFSA is meant to be used as a template so that countries can tailor and adapt to suit their needs and integrate in their website in their respective languages. Whilst EFSA has included in its own website information on the EU food safety system and co-operation in its 4 working languages (English, French, Italian and German), this is not necessarily

the same text that members will wish to use on their websites. EFSA understands that translation can be an issue for members but cannot ensure itself accurate translation and validation of translated texts in all languages of the European Union. Daniel Glanville asked members to send him their feedback and comments on this issue within two weeks from the meeting date. He asked members to indicate if this was a useful initiative; if not, what the main problems were; and if members had other ideas which they wished to put forward regarding online communications co-operation.

5.4 Lucia de Luca gave a brief overview of the six joint events organised since the beginning of the year and mentioned that the next event will be in Den Haag, preceding the December's Advisory Forum meeting. The joint events proved to be a good example for illustrating the co-operation between EFSA and the Member States. They attract a high level of interest, and more events will be organised in the future. Members were asked to provide input and suggestions on future event formats. They were also asked to check if any food safety related conferences will be organised in their respective countries during the coming year, which could be used as a platform for a joint event. As far as next year's events, invitations have already been received from Denmark, Slovenia and Norway.

6. Revision of the Terms of Reference of the AF Comm WG by Karen Talbot

6.1 Karen Talbot introduced this agenda item and thanked members who had contributed to the questionnaire related to the renewal of the Terms of Reference.

6.2 Anne-Laure Gassin proposed to go through all the points of the documents. This led to some questions and comments concerning objectives, membership in the group, liaison with other staff in the communications departments of members and joint pre-notification of press releases.

6.3 Anne-Laure Gassin closed the discussion confirming that the document will be amended to reflect the members' comments and circulated to the group. Further comments on the revised version should be sent to Karen Talbot in view of preparing a final text to be presented at the next meeting Advisory Forum on 6-7th December for approval.

7. Sharing learning experiences – a case history – by Pierre Cassart, FAVV-AFSCA, Belgium

7.1 Pierre Cassart from FAVV-AFSCA (Belgium) presented a case history which occurred in Belgium last August. A group of scouts camping in a central area of the country was taken to hospital due to food poisoning which seemed to be caused by eating frozen hamburgers. Bacteriological results revealed the presence of staphylococcus caused by low hygiene conditions in the production phase. Communication about the issue became difficult due to the fact that camp managers and producers were not accepting responsibilities for the case.

7.2 The case shows how the non-respect of good food handling practices can create a huge alarm when young children are affected, when contrasting information are received by different sources and when those responsible do not accept their role in ensuring food safety. It proved that tailored information sessions on food hygiene and handling need to be promoted by the authorities

7.3 Anne-Laure Gassin thanked Pierre Cassart for presenting the case and once again underlined the importance of sharing experiences. She called for a volunteer for the next sessions in 2008.

8. Declaration of interest: EFSA Policy and implementation by Dirk Detken

8.1 Dirk Detken, Head of HR ad interim, presented the new policy on Declarations of Interests to the group outlining that declaring interests is a legal obligation for all the scientific experts working for EFSA, for Advisory Forum and Management Board members and also for the EFSA AD grade staff. He explained how members declare their interests both on an annual basis and for a specific meeting or mandate.

8.2. Anne-Laure Gassin raised the question related to the fact that members of the AFWG on Communications often alternate. It was confirmed that members participating in meetings, even on a temporary basis, must fill in a Declaration of Interest. EFSA secretariat will circulate the new DOI policy and forms to members to be completed for 2008.

9. Promoting visibility of risk assessment work amongst the scientific community – discussions to share ideas/experiences by Claire Gaudout

9.1 Anne-Laure Gassin introduced the item and gave the floor to Claire Gaudout who reminded members that building the visibility of EFSA's work in the scientific community is one of the pillars of the Communications strategy paper endorsed by the EFSA Management Board in December 2006. After explaining the basic concepts for assessing the value of scientific publications (such as impact factor and peer-review) and listing the possible existing options for increasing visibility, Claire Gaudout asked members to provide recommendations on the subject, in particular related to the opportunity of creating a scientific journal for the scientific community.

9.2 Anne-Laure Gassin closed the discussion inviting members to send their ideas and comments on the creation of a scientific journal to Claire Gaudout. This topic will be further discussed by the working group in 2008.

10. Communications: information exchange and forward planning

a. Key country issues regarding risk communications

(Doc AF Comm WG 05 07 07 – 6)

Karin Gustafsson gave an update on the folic acid issue in Sweden. Considering the high incidence of neural tube defects in babies, folic acid tablets will be distributed to Swedish women in the age range 18-45 free of charge. Karin Gustafsson shared some questions with the group in order to have suggestions from members concerning communication of measures taken and how the target group can best be reached.

Key issues were received from Austria, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Gaby-Fleur Böl brought the 5th Anniversary of the BfR to the attention of the group and invited members to attend the events taking place in Berlin. A brochure with a full program is available on the website of the German food safety agency.

Justin Everard gave an update on a recent study conducted by Southampton University which showed a possible association between artificial colours and behaviour in hyperactive children. The results of the research are now being assessed by EFSA and a final report will be ready at the end of January 2008. Anne-Laure Gassin added that the work done in communicating the results of the research is a good example of cooperation with Member States. EFSA and Advisory Forum members were briefed by the UK Food Standards Agency in advance and thanks to a close and continuous contact, EFSA was able to communicate simultaneously with the FSA UK as soon as the research was published.

b. EFSA: overview of upcoming scientific issues and related communication activities by Alun Jones

(Doc AF Comm WG 05 07 07 – 7)

Alun Jones gave an overview of upcoming scientific issues for which future communications may be foreseen. Among others, he mentioned the evaluation of flavourings, the Southampton research commissioned by the FSA UK and for which EFSA has created a working group which includes behavioral specialists. He also mentioned other scientific issues as: the safety of taurine and d-glucoronolactone, acrylamide, nitrate in vegetables, the work in progress concerning nutrition and health claims, reptile meat, meat and bone meal, killing and skinning of seals and finally fish and pig welfare. Before concluding, he also gave an update on animal cloning and nanotechnology for which EFSA has received mandates from the Commission and which will be topics for discussion at

the Scientific Forum that EFSA is organizing in Brussels to celebrate its 5th Anniversary.

11. EFSA's 5th Anniversary, an overview of Parma Week events by Lucia de Luca Brussels Week events by Alun Jones

11.1 Lucia de Luca presented a brief update of the 5th Anniversary events which took place in Parma at the beginning of October giving some details and results. Mary Eleftheriadou from Cyprus asked if the materials used in the activities directed to Parma citizens, such as quiz and games, could be shared with group.

11.2 Alun Jones gave an overview of the activities planned in Brussels. The events will take place from 19 to 22 November. A scientific forum with over 500 participants including scientists, stakeholders, risk managers and risk assessors will last two days and the agenda will include items such as nanotechnology, animal cloning, chemical and microbiological risks, GMO risk assessment, nutrition and risk communications. A summit with decision makers from the Member States, EU institutions, international organizations and non EU partner countries will follow the forum.

11.3 As a round-table to look at key communications challenges in food safety will take place in the context of the parallel sessions organised at the Forum, Anne-Laure Gassin invited members to provide her with questions and topics which could be raised on that occasion. She also thanked Oskar Wawshinek for accepting the invitation to actively participate in the round-table. Philip Tod of DG COMM would also be a participant in the round table.

12. Proposed dates for 2008

12.1 Anne-Laure Gassin presented a proposal for meeting dates in 2008 (21 February – 17 April – 19 June – 23 October) and asked members to confirm their availability and possible invitations. Gaby-Fleur Böl invited the group to meet in Berlin and she will confirm in writing soon.

13. Any other business

13.1 No other points were raised and the Chair closed the meeting at 15.00 by thanking members for their participation and EFSA staff for the organization.